



## And So It Grows

We got a break from days of rain, some of them warm, others not so much and I took to the woods. Intending to poke around a few places of interest, it surprised me when I decided to pull into this particular spot. At first glance, it is not the prettiest of places to visit. Blown down in the July 2012 storm that made quite a mark on the Chippewa National Forest, two years later it burned in a fire set off by a power line in a strong wind. Not long after that the wood was salvaged, and the site was further treated with machinery to prepare it for planting. That's a lot of things going on in one little piece of woods.

But the lake is there, and the landing is handy and so it makes an easy spot for a quick check. It's a little rough yet, there not yet being time for things to settle much, but already the signs of life are strong at this site. You will find quaking and big-toothed aspen, oak and maple sprouts across the area, the spring leaves fresh and still coming on. Large-leaved asters are up now, and the violets are blooming. Nestled amongst the ferns and grasses are young white and red pine, planted just this spring. This will be a diverse woods, and the pines will need some tending in order to ensure some make it into maturity.

Scattered around on the site are some snags, some large logs lying about, and a few remnant standing pine trees that survived the wind. These structural legacies of the preceding older forest will serve a host of wildlife. Woodpeckers will work over the trees, creating cavities that they and others will use. Tree swallows and chickadees use such places to rear their young. Bats may roost in the cavities and under the loose and peeling bark. They like their snags more open to the sun, to provide heat for their pups. Perhaps a porcupine will one day stash its baby in the base of one of these trees. One of the taller pines with a few branches left on it just might attract an eagle, for perching if not for nesting. Eagles love a view, and this one comes with nearby water. As the aspen and brush grow thicker, a grouse could drum from one of the big logs on the ground.

This morning I can hear tree swallows gurgling overhead. The open site is virtually crawling with palm warblers and chipping sparrows, the morning being yet cool and bugs close to the ground. A pretty little chestnut-sided warbler calls out his "please please pleased to



meet ya” tune. This bird thrives on forest openings. Across the way a couple of robins spar. I can hear sapsuckers, nuthatches, and black-and-white warblers, to name a few.

Ovenbirds sing from just next door, where the forest is older, having survived the vagaries of wind. Here also the woods meets with water, and the tremolo of a loon mixes with the call of the yellowthroat. I can’t see the black-throated green warbler, but that “zoo zoo zoo zoo zee” means he is here, too.

If you look close, the place has a beauty all its own. The bloom of the violet; some fungus and lichens now easy to see on a downed tree. Take a look across the lake for a hint of the things to come as our forest grows. Ours is a resilient forest, prone to recovery. We help it along, as best we are able.



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